

Message Text

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ACTION EA-12

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C O N F I D E N T I A L VIENTIANE 941

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PEPR, LA, JA, US
SUBJECT: LAO ACCUSATIONS RE SUGIE MURDERS

REF: VIENTIANE 938

1. I TOOK THE OCCASION OF AN AUGUST 29 DINNER IN HONOR
OF THE MEKONG COMMITTEE TO BUTTONHOLE THE HOST, DEPUTY
PRIME MINISTER PHOUMI VONGVICHIT, WHO IS CURRENTLY THE
HIGHEST RANKING LAO IN TOWN, ON THE SUBJECT OF THE LAO
ACCUSATION THAT WE HAD SUBORNED THE SUGIE MURDERS.
ACTING FOREIGN MINISTER KHAMPHAY HAD INVITED ME TO SIT
DOWN NEXT TO PHOUMI.

2. WE OPENED THE CONVERSATION WITH REMINISCENCES ABOUT
FORMER UNDER SECRETARY HABIB AND ABOUT FORMER U.S. AMBAS-
SADORS IN VIENTIANE. I ALSO THANKED PHOUMI FOR RECEIVING
CODEL MONTGOMERY. PHOUMI THEN ASKED ME WHAT CHAIRMAN
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MONTGOMERY HAD THOUGHT OF HIS VISIT TO LAOS. I SAID I
THOUGHT HIS REACTION HAD BEEN VERY GOOD, BUT THAT I HAD
BEEN VERY DISAPPOINTED BY WHAT HAD BEEN SAID AFTER THE
VISIT BY THE LAO GOVERNMENT. I SAID THAT THE ACCUSA-
TION THAT WE HAD HAD THE SUGIES MURDERED WAS COMPLETELY
GROUNDLESS AND WAS PARTICULARLY UNFORTUNATE COMING RIGHT
AFTER THE MONTGOMERY VISIT. IT WOULD BE VERY DIFFICULT

FOR ME WHEN I WENT TO WASHINGTON TO EXPLAIN WHAT THE
LAO GOVERNMENT MEANT BY MAKING SUCH A CHARGE. WE HAD
NOTHING TO DO WITH THE LAO INSURGENCY AND NOTHING TO
DO WITH THE SUGIE MURDERS.

3. PHOUMI ANSWERED BY SAYING THAT THE KILLERS HAD SAID
THAT THEY HAD BEEN HIRED BY THE CIA. QTE THAT'S WHAT
THEY SAID IN COURT, UNQTE PHOUMI SAID. I INDICATED
THAT I THOUGHT THIS WAS INTERESTING, BUT IT WOULD STILL
BE VERY DIFFICULT TO EXPLAIN IN WASHINGTON.

4. COMMENT: PHOUMI'S STATEMENT MAY WELL BE TRUE, BUT
THE ACCUSATION THAT THE USG ASUBORNED THE KILLERS HAS
BEEN PUBLISHED AS THE FORMAL JUDGEMENT OF THE COURT.
SINCE THERE IS NO SUCH THING AS AN INDEPENDENT JUDICIARY
IN LAOS, THIS MEANS THAT THE LAO GOVERNMENT IS SEEING
FIT TO LET ITS FOREIGN POLICY BE DETERMINED BY
UNSUPPORTED STATEMENTS OF CONVICTED ASSASSINS.

5. THIS IS ABOUT AS FAR AS THIS MATTER CAN BE TAKEN
LOCALLY AND INFORMALLY. I STILL THINK IT WOULD BE A
GOOD IDEA FOR THE DEPARTMENT TO CALL IN KHAMTAN FOR A
FORMAL DISCUSSION OF THE SUBJECT.
ROBERTS

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